



The Source of True Praise **Romans 2:17-29**

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Romans 2:29—KJV).

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God (Romans 2:29—NASB).

No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God (Romans 2:29—NRSV).

The rite of circumcision showed that God had set apart the Jews to obey Him and teach His law to others. Whereas the Jews had the law of God written for them by Moses, if the Gentiles were not taught God's law, they had to learn it from using their reason, from observing natural laws, and from their conscience. However, Paul showed that neither the Jews, who had the written law, nor the Gentiles, who had reason, nature, and conscience, perfectly did everything they knew they should do. To truly obey God, people need a circumcised heart, a commitment to obey God and the divine power to do so. A rabbi can perform an outward circumcision, but only the Holy Spirit can perform an inward circumcision of the heart that will empower and teach people how to serve God and

others. No law can give anyone the power to do what God's law says. Laws will not fill people with love for the lawgiver. God's law shows people how much they deserve to be punished by the King of the universe. However, when someone knows they are condemned by the law of God and then learns that the King of the universe sent His only Son to die as a sacrifice so He could mercifully forgive them, adopt them into His family, make Jesus their elder brother, and fill them with the Holy Spirit, their King wins their love. Their new lives may not please everyone, but they will receive praise from God.

Thinking Further

1. If you do not rely on the law, what do you rely on for your salvation. Describe your answer.
2. The Jews thought that in the law they had the embodiment of knowledge and truth (Romans 2:20). Do you agree or disagree? Give a reason for your answer.
3. Read Romans 2:23 again. How might you rephrase that verse to teach it to a persistently disobedient Christian?
4. Would you agree or disagree with the rephrasing or application of Romans 2:25 below?

“Baptism has value if you love and follow Jesus Christ, but if you walk away from Christ you are acting like one who was never baptized.”
5. Do you think Romans 2:29 could refer to both Gentile and Jewish Christians? Why?